

# PRESS RELEASE

9. 11. 2022

## **The Prague Spring Festival to be opened by Tomáš Hanus with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra**

The already 78th Prague Spring International Music Festival will be opened with Smetana's *My Country* by the Welsh National Opera Orchestra from Cardiff and its chief conductor Tomáš Hanus on 12 and 13 May 2023. Violist Antoine Tamestit whom audiences will hear at four concerts will be the artist-in-residence of the Prague Spring Festival. Daniel Harding and Tomáš Netopil will appear at the helm of foreign orchestras; Czech orchestras will be conducted by John Adams, Klaus Mäkelä and Oksana Lyniv. Georg Friedrich Haas will be the composer-in-residence of the Prague Offspring weekend of contemporary music; his compositions will be played by the Klangforum Wien ensemble. Early music will be represented by Les Talens Lyriques, Christophe Rousset, harpsichordist and pianist Jean Rondeau and countertenor Andreas Scholl. This year, the festival will build on the tradition of closing concerts with the program of the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with conductor Christoph Eschenbach. Ticket sales begin on Friday, 11 November at 11:00 a.m. at [festival.cz](http://festival.cz).

## **The Opening Concert and Czech Traces Abroad**

The appearance of Tomáš Hanus who is also on the festival's artistic board in the Czech Republic is a very special occasion. Last time he performed at the festival ten years ago when he conducted the Ensemble intercontemporain. He has been at the helm of the Welsh Orchestra for six years and continues to nourish the interest of the British audience in Czech music. He follows in the footsteps of conductor Charles Mackerras who premiered Bohuslav Martinů's *Greek Passion* in Cardiff and director David Pountney, former Artistic Director of the Welsh National Opera. The director whose work could also be seen by opera goers in Brno and Prague, introduced *Her Stepdaughter* by Janáček to the Cardiff audience as early as in 1975.

*"The guest appearance the orchestra under the baton of Tomáš Hanus is a dream come true for us. The successes of Tomáš abroad deepen our curiosity about the direction of his musical thinking and the evolution of his conducting style. The Czech-Welsh My country will certainly be festive, but also fresh and unbridled by musical conventions,"* says festival director Pavel Trojan.

*“Nowadays, the tones of My Country are much needed. They awaken the better part of us and our self-awareness, they show what our history tells us and what its meaning is. Music has the power to go deeper than words. We do not have the obligation to incline in front of the Smetana’s My Country and put on grave looks while getting a little bit bored. It has the power to find us and embrace us,”* says Tomáš Hanus.

*“The British love affair with Czech music, which can be traced right back to Antonín Dvořák’s appearances in Britain during the 1880s, shows no sign of cooling off,”* says John Allison, editor-in-chief of Opera, a British magazine, commenting on the Cardiff orchestra’s guest appearance in the Czech Republic. *“Yet it is something rarer for British-based musicians to bring Czech music to Czech cities, especially since the death of the great Charles Mackerras, which makes the visit of the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera to the prestigious opening of the Prague Spring Festival in May 2023 all the more newsworthy. Though the Orchestra of WNO is first and foremost an opera orchestra, its reputation in symphonic music makes this Má vlast eagerly awaited,”* adds John Allison.

Besides Tomáš Hanus, conductor Tomáš Netopil is one of the most successful Czech conductors in the world and one of ambassadors of Czech music. For the tenth season, he serves as the music director and chief conductor of the Philharmonic Essen, with which he will perform a programme of works by Elgar and Dvořák in Prague together with the violinist Frank Peter Zimmermann. *“Thanks to our long-term cooperation and I think not only because of it, the Essen Philharmonic has a very deep and intense relationship to Czech music,”* says Tomáš Netopil. During his stint in Essen, with the orchestra he did e.g. Bohuslav Martinů’s *Greek Passion*, Janáček’s *Her Stepdaughter*, Dvořák’s *Rusalka*, Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*, as well as symphonic music by Josef Suk, Karel Husa and Antonín Dvořák.

## **Artist-in-residence: Antoine Tamestit**

At the 78th edition of festival, viola will be given more space than ever. On the one hand, besides the trombone, it is an instrument of this year’s Prague Spring interpretation competition and it is also the instrument of the festival’s artist-in-residence Antoine Tamestit. *“I dare say that, without exaggeration, we can described him as one of the greatest artists of the middle generation. I am all the more pleased that we will introduce Antoine Tamestit in several positions with a very wide repertoire alongside international and local artists. We will really have an opportunity to enjoy his presence here in Prague because he accepted our offer to chair the jury of the viola competition where other excellent violists will sit with him,”* says Josef Třeštík, Prague Spring programming director.

In two evening recitals at the Rudolfinum, Antoine Tamestit will perform first with his long-time artistic partner, the pianist Cédric Tiberghien and then with the outstanding violinist Isabelle Faust. In addition to the giants of the Romantic period, Franz Schubert and

Robert Schumann, the piano concert will also feature music by the master of Elizabethan melancholy, John Dowland, on whose famous song Benjamin Britten composed variations, and a sonata by the 20th-century British-American viola virtuoso Rebecca Clarke. The programming of the concert of Antoine Tamestit with Isabelle Faust is also unusual. Works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart will underline the contrast between the 17th-century composer Jean de Sainte-Colombe and the living author Györg Kurtág.

The peak of Antoine Tamestit's residence will be a concert with the Czech Philharmonic and Finnish conductor Klaus Mäkelä who, at the age of twenty-six, is one of the most sought-after conductors of our time. *"This vibrant artist left a clear mark in Oslo, took over the lead of the Orchestre de Paris and, from the 2027/28 season, he will serve as the chief conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam which ranks among the top world's orchestras. We are delighted that his Czech debut will take place at our festival with the impressive Concerto for Viola and Orchestra by Alfred Schnittke"* says Prague Spring Director Pavel Trojan. The joint work of the jury in the field of viola and trombone will culminate with two concerts: in the Convent of St. Agnes and in the National Technical Museum. Here, the jurors will perform as solo, chamber and tutti players and perform a personal and original programme. Concerts entitled: Viola? Viola! and Trombone? Trombone! will be a celebration of music and music-making.

## **Adams and Eschenbach: legendary musicians in Prague**

The Czech Philharmonic will play a concert with the legend of American music John Adams as composer and conductor. The orchestra will perform two of Adams' works where the piano score work entitled *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* will be played by Víkingur Ólafsson, an Icelandic pianist. The program also includes Adams' riveting orchestral miniature *I Still Dance*, dedicated to conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and his husband Joshua Robinson, a former gymnast and swing dancer. The second half will include music by Igor Stravinsky and Gabriella Smith, one of the most successful American composers of our time and a devoted environmentalist.

Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* will be performed twice, at the end of the festival, with the Czech Philharmonic under the baton of Christoph Eschenbach. One of the most frequently performed works in the history of the festival was last performed at Prague Spring in 2010. The two concerts are linked together by the performance of the Prague Philharmonic Choir with the choirmaster Lukáš Vasilek; this time the vocal soloists include Simona Šaturová, Lucie Hilscherová, Australian tenor Steve Davislim and Jan Martiník.

## **The Return of the Kubelík's Orchestra**

In May 2023, the league of top orchestras will be represented by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra whose guest appearance and the presence of conductor Daniel Harding the festival has been striving for several years. The concert will feature Mahler's

*Seventh Symphony* which had its world premiere in Prague in September 1908 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the reign of the Austrian Emperor and the King of Bohemia Franz Joseph I when the Czech Philharmonic was conducted by the composer himself.

## Early Music at the Festival

Early music will be brought to Prague by the top French orchestra of period instruments Les Talens Lyriques with its founder Christophe Rousset. As part of their first Czech performance, they will perform two operas from the time of the reign of Louis XIV in the form of concerts. The opera *Almasis* by the almost forgotten composer Joseph-Nicolas-Panrace Royer will be performed in Prague even as a modern day premiere and then will be brought to other parts of Europe in the form of a concert tour. The second opera will be *Pygmalion* by Jean-Philippe Rameau. Guest appearances of vocal specialists in the performance of Early Music in Prague shall include: soprano Déborah Cachet, mezzo-sopranos Natalie Perrez and Ambrosine Bré, tenor Mathias Vidal and baritone David Witczak. *“The invitation to the Prague Spring Festival is a joy and an honour. Abroad, I like to act as an ambassador of French music – it is a repertoire dear to my heart and a part of my DNA. Royer and Rameau will undoubtedly win the hearts of Prague audiences,”* says conductor Christophe Rousset in anticipation of the festival concert.

The Rudolfinum festival venue will witness the Festivities of Early Music for the second time thanks to the Czech Ensemble Baroque and its founder and conductor Roman Válek. The ensemble’s tireless research and rediscovery of the works by the Czech Baroque and Classicist composer František Ignác Tůma has yielded a magnificent *Te Deum* in which the alto part will be performed by the German countertenor Andreas Scholl. The modern-day Czech premiere in May 2023 at the Prague Spring Festival is heralded by the recording by the Czech Ensemble Baroque with music by František Ignác Tůma which will be released in November 2022 by label Supraphon.

## Prague Orchestras with Festival Glamour

Two prominent personalities of the middle generation will conduct the concerts featuring two Czech orchestras. *“It is indeed a festival program that will be played at the concert of the PKF – Prague Philharmonia with Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv who has earned respect for her first-class musicality, talent and courage to freely present her civic stance,”* says Prague Spring Director Pavel Trojan. Oksana Lyniv previously assisted Kirill Petrenko at the Bavarian State Opera, then took over the post of Music Director of the Graz Opera and was the first female conductor at the Bayreuth Festival. In collaboration with soprano Julia Tkachenko and the winners of the Prague Spring International Music Competition, bassoonist Minju Kim and clarinettist Lilian Lefebvre, she will perform the Prague Symphony by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Duet-Concertino by Richard Strauss

and a new composition on lyrics by Ukrainian poet Lina Kostenko written by her compatriot Eduard Resatsch.

A concert to mark the 100th anniversary of the beginning of regular broadcasting by the Czech Radio will be a special event. The Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra will perform under the baton of the excellent German conductor Cornelius Meister and Dvořák's Violin Concerto will be performed by Jan Mráček, the concert master of the Czech Philharmonic. *"More than twenty years ago when I was still a student, I fell in love with the symphonies by Bohuslav Martinů,"* confides Cornelius Meister, adding: *"At that time, I got to know the incredibly powerful and deeply emotive recordings by Václav Neumann."* This Czech conductor was one of the prominent music directors of the State Opera and State Orchestra in Stuttgart, a post that has been now occupied by Cornelius Meister since 2018. *"Meister has a very warm relationship to Czech music. In addition to the music by Bohuslav Martinů and Antonín Dvořák, he likes to play the works by Leoš Janáček and, as a world premiere, he featured several works by contemporary composer Miroslav Srnka who is his generation peer,"* says Josef Třeštík, the Prague Spring programming director.

The FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra will have an opportunity to witness the start of the artistic career of the Czech conductor Alena Jelínková – the Debut of the Prague Spring will be hers. *"Standing alongside the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra and being part of the Prague Spring Festival is a great honour for me and I am very much looking forward to our cooperation,"* says Alena Jelínková. *"The programme consists of an unusual combination of three works: popular ballet Romeo and Juliet by Sergei Prokofiev, Pines of Rome, in which the Italian composer Ottorino Respighi evokes the eternal city using a rich colour play and Capriccio for cello and orchestra by the Czech classical composer of the 20th century, Jan Novák,"* explains Josef Třeštík, the Prague Spring programming director. The cello score will be performed by Tomáš Jamník.

## World Class Soloists

After eleven years, mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená and pianist Mitsuko Uchida will arrive at the festival to perform a program of French songs with compositions by Claude Debussy and Olivier Messiaen. The musical rendition of the motifs of love and passion draws inspiration from the work by Paul Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire or Pierre Louÿs.

The personalities performing at the festival will also include the remarkable pianist who debuted in Prague in 2021 at the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival. This time, the Rudolfinum will resound with compositions by Richard Wagner arranged by Zoltán Kocsis and as well as by Johannes Brahms, Franz Liszt and jazz pianist and composer Fred Hersch premiered only this year at Carnegie Hall.

The acclaimed harpsichordist Jean Rondeau, winner of the Prague Spring International Music Competition, has been waiting for his festival debut for eleven years. He will first perform as a soloist with his own program entitled *Ascent of Mount Parnassus* with works



by Johann Joseph Fux, Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Muzio Clementi, after whose extensive work referring to the desire for artistic perfection the whole program is named. The second opportunity to hear Jean Rondeau at the festival will be during a joint performance in a quartet with the Nevermind ensemble. The program includes the work of a single composer, brilliant Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

## **Prague Offspring with George Friedrich Haas**

For the second time, a weekend festival residency of Klangforum Wien, a leading contemporary music ensemble will take place, as part of Prague Offspring at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague. After Olga Neuwirth, the composer-in-residence will be another prominent figure in contemporary classical music, Georg Friedrich Haas. The ensemble will perform his Percussion Concerto and the composition “in vain”. Prague Spring continues to commission compositions by contemporary Czech composers. At Prague Offspring, Klangforum Wien will premiere works by Jana Vöröšová, Matouš Hejl, František Chaloupka, Michaela Pálek Plachká, Šimon Voseček and Pavel Šabacký, a student at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, who was commissioned a work after having attended the Reading Lesson in May 2022. Klangforum Wien will be conducted by Peter Rundel on both evenings on 26 and 27 May 2023.

In addition to the concerts, the Prague Offspring program will also include a masterclass, a public rehearsal of students' works (Reading Lessons), a discussion with George Friedrich Haas and a screening of the film Hyena with Mollena Williams-Haas, writer, performer, BDSM coach and wife of the composer-in-residence in the title role.

## **Long-term partner support**

The main supporters of the Prague Spring International Music Festival include the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the City of Prague and individual donors – the Friends of the Prague Spring. Partners of the festival include innogy Česká republika, Subterra a.s., CETIN a.s., Mercedes-Benz Česká republika s.r.o. The Czech Television is the general media partner, the Czech Radio is the main media partner and Hospodářské noviny is the media partner.

### **Contact person for the media**

Juraj Gerbery  
+420 774 574 130  
[gerbery@festival.cz](mailto:gerbery@festival.cz)

## **Opening Concert of the Prague Spring Festival**

### **Bedřich Smetana: My Country**

2023 Welsh National Opera Orchestra, Tomáš Hanus

- 2022 West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Thomas Guggeis
- 2021 Collegium 1704, Václav Luks
- 2020
- 2019 Bamberger Symphoniker, Jakub Hrůša
- 2018 Czech Philharmonic, Tomáš Netopil
- 2017 Wiener Philharmoniker, Daniel Barenboim
- 2016 Czech Philharmonic, Paavo Järvi
- 2015 NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, Thomas Hengelbrock
- 2014 Czech Philharmonic, Jiří Bělohlávek
- 2013 Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Peter Oundjian
- 2012 Czech Philharmonic, Vasilij Petrenko
- 2011 Prague Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, Jiří Bělohlávek
- 2010 PKF-Prague Philharmonia, Jakub Hrůša
- 2009 Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Antoni Wit
- 2008 Brno Philharmonic, Petr Altrichter
- 2007 Czech Philharmonic, Zdeněk Mácal
- 2006 Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ondřej Kukul (2nd opening concert 12 May)
- 2005 London Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis
- 2004 Prague Symphony Orchestra, Jiří Kout
- 2003 Czech Philharmonic, Christian Arming
- 2002 Czech Philharmonic, Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi
- 2001 Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek
- 2000 Prague Symphony Orchestra, Petr Altrichter
- 1999 Czech Philharmonic, Charles Mackerras
- 1998 Czech Philharmonic, Vladimír Válek
- 1997 FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra, Gaetano Deloghu
- 1996 London Classical Players, Roger Norrington
- 1995 Czech Philharmonic, Libor Pešek
- 1994 Prague Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi
- 1993 Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Libor Pešek
- 1992 Czech Philharmonic, Zdeněk Košler
- 1991 Czech Philharmonic, Gustav Kuhn
- 1990 Czech Philharmonic, Rafael Kubelík
- 1989 Czech Philharmonic, Charles Mackerras
- 1988 Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Jiří Bělohlávek